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CONCERNING  
THE  
NEVV CHVRCH  
DISCIPLINE.

AN EXCELLENT LETTER

Written by  
M<sup>r</sup>. GEORGE CRANMER  
to M<sup>r</sup> R. H.



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## THE WORDS OF THE

learned Mr CAMDEN in his Annals

of Queene ELIZABETH Anno 42.

concerning this Author

Mr G. Cranmer.



*His Cranmer (whose christen name was George) was a Gentleman of singular hopes, the eldest sonne of Thomas Cranmer, sonne of Edmund Cranmer the Arch-bishopsbrother.*

*He spent a good part of his youth, in Corpus Christi Colledge in Oxford, where he proceeded and continued Master of Arts of sixe yeares*

*standing before he removed: and then betook  
himselfe to Secretary Davison. After whose  
faill, he went in place of Secretary with Sir Hen-  
ry Killegrew in his Embassage into France.  
And after his death, he accompanied that worthy  
and learned Gentleman Sir Edwin Sands, in  
his travels into France, Germany, Italy and o-  
ther parts, by the space of three yeares. And  
after his returne, was sought after by the most  
Noble Lord Mountjoy, with whom he went into  
Ireland, where he remained, untill his unfortu-  
nate death (in a Battell against the Rebels  
neare Carlingford) cut off the great  
bopes conceived of him.*

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# CONCERNING

the new Church

*Government.*

**W**Hat posterity is likely to judge of these matters concerning Church-discipline, wee may the better conjecture, if wee call to mind what our own age, within few yeares, upon better experience hath already judged concerning the same. It may be remembered that at first, the greatest part of the learned in the land were either eagerly affected, or favourably inclined that way. The Bookes then written for the most part favoured of the disciplinary stile: it sounded every where in pulpits, and in the common phraze of mens speech: the contrary part began to feare they had taken a wrong course,

many which impugned the discipline, yet so impugned it, not as not being the better forme of government, but as not so convenient for our State, in regard of dangerous innovations thereby likely to grow. One man alone there was, to speake of, (whom let no suspition of flattery deprive of his deserved commendation;) Who, in the diffidence of the one part, and courage of the other, stood in the gap, and gave others respite to prepare themselves to their defence; which by the sudden eagernesse and violence of their adversaries had otherwise been prevented. Wherein God hath made good unto him his owne emprese, *Vincit qui patitur*, for what contumelious indignities he hath at their hands sustained, the world is witnesse; and what reward of honour above his adversaries God hath bestowed upon him, themselves (though nothing glad thereof) must needs confesse. Now of late yeares the heate of men towards the Discipline is greatly decaied: their iudgments begin to sway on the other side:  
the

the learned haue weighed it and found it light: wise men conceiue some feare, lest it prove not only not the best kind of government, but the very bane and destruction of all government. The cause of this change in mens opinions may be drawen from the generall nature of error, disguised and clothed with the name of truth; which is mightily and violently to possesse men at first; but afterwards, the weaknesse thereof being by time discovered, to loose that reputation, which before it had gained. As by the outside of an house the Passers by are oftentimes deceived, till they see the conveniency of the roomes within: so by the very name of Discipline and Reformation men were drawen at first to cast a fancy towards it, but now they have not contented themselves only to passe by and behold a farre off the forefront of this reformed houle; they have entred in, even at the speciall request of the Master workmen and chiefe Builders thereof: they have perused the roomes, the lights, the conveniences they finde them not answerable

swerable to that report which was made of them, nor to that opinion which upon report they had conceived. So as now the Discipline which at first triumphed over all, being unmasked, beginneth to droope and hang downe her head.

This cause of change in opinion concerning the Discipline, is proper to the learned, or to such as by them have been instructed: another cause there is more open and more apparent to the view of all: namely, the course of practice which the Reformers have had with us from the beginning. The first degree was only some small difference about Cap and Surplesse, but not such as either bred division in the Church, or tended to the ruine of the government then established. This was peaceable; the next degree more stirring. Admonitions were directed to the Parliament in peremptory sort against our whole forme of Regiment: In defence of them volumes were published in English, in Latin: Yet this was no more than writing. Devices were set on foot to erect



erect the practice of the discipline without authority; yet herein some regard of modesty, some moderation was used. Behold, at length it brake forth into open outrage, first in writing by *Martin*: in whose kind of dealing these things may be observed. 1. That whereas *T.C.* and others his great Masters had alwaies before set out the discipline as a *Queen*, and as the daughter of God, he contrariwise to make her more acceptable to the people, brought her forth as a vice upon the stage. 2. Which conceit of his was grounded (as may be supposed) upon this rare policie, that seeing the Discipline was by writing refuted, in Parliament rejected, in secret corners hunted out and descried, it was imagined that by open railing (which to the vulgar is commonly most plausible) the state Ecclesiasticall might have been drawn into such contempt and hatred, as the overthrow thereof should have been most gratefull to all men, and in a manner desired of the common people. 3. It may be noted (and this I know my

B selfe



selfe to be true ) how some of them, although they could not for shame approve so lewd an action, yet were content to lay hold on it to the advancement of their cause, acknowledging therein the secret judgements of God against the Bps, and hoping that some good might be wrought thereby for his Church, as indeed there was, though not according to their construction. For, 4. contrary to their expectation, that railing spirit did not only not further, but extreemly disgrace and prejudice their cause, when it was once perceived from how low degrees of contradiction at first, to what outrage of contumely and slander they were at length proceeded, and were also likely further to proceed.

A further degree of outrage was in fact. Certain Prophets did arise, who deeming it not possible that *God* should suffer that undone which they did so fiercely desire to have done, namely, that his holy Saints, the favourers and fathers of the Discipline should be enlarged, and delivered from persecution

secution; and seeing no meanes of deliverance ordinary, were faine to perswade themselves that *God* must needs raise some extraordinary meanes: and being perswaded of none so well as of themselves, they forthwith must needs be the instruments of this great worke. Hereupon they framed unto themselves an assured hope, that upon their preaching out of a pease-cart, all the multitude would have presently joyned unto them, and in amazement of mind have asked them, *Viri fratres, quid agimus?* whereunto it is likely they would have returned an answer farre unlike to that of *S. Peter*, such and such are men unworthy to govern, pluck them down; such and such are the deare children of *God*, let them be advanced. Of two of these men it is meet to speake with all commiseration, yet so that others by their example may receive instruction, and withall some light may appeare what stirring affections the Discipline is like to inspire, if it light upon apt and prepared minds. Now if any man doubt of what

society they were, or if the reformers dis-  
 claime them, pretending that by them they  
 were condemned, let these points be consi-  
 dered. 1. *Whose associats were they before  
 their entring into this frantick passion? Whose  
 Sermons did they frequent? Whom did they ad-  
 mire?* 2. Even when they were entring in-  
 to it, *Whose advise did they require?* and when  
 they were in, *whose approbation? Whom adver-  
 tised they of their purpose? Whose assistance by  
 prayers did they request?* But wee deale in-  
 juriously with them to lay this to their  
 charge: for they reprov'd and condemned  
 it. How? did they disclose it to the Magi-  
 strate, that it might be suppressed? or were  
 they rather content to stand aloofe and see  
 the end of it, and loath to quench the spirit?  
 No doubt these mad practitioners were of  
 their society, with whom before, and in the  
 practise of their madnesse they had most af-  
 finity. Hereof read Doct. *Bancrofts* book.

A third inducement may be to dislike of  
 the Discipline, if we consider not only how  
 farre the reformers themselves have procee-  
 ded,

ded, but what others upon their foundations have built. Here come the *Brownists* in the first ranke, their lineall descendants, who have seised upon a number of strange opinions, whereof although their Ancestors the reformers were never actually possessed, yet by right and interest from them derived, the *Brownists* and *Barrowists* hath taken possession of them. For if the positions of the Reformers be true, I cannot see how the maine and generall conclusions of *Brownisme* should be false. For upon these two points, as I conceive they stand, 1. *That because we have no Church, they are to sever themselves from us:* 2. *That without Civill authority they are to erect a Church of their owne.* And if the former of these be true, the latter, I suppose will follow. For if above all things men be to regard their salvation, and if out of the Church there be no salvation; it followeth, that if we have no Church, we have no meanes of salvation, and therefore separation from us, in that respect, both lawfull and necessary: as also that men so separated



from the false and counterfeit Church, are to associate themselves unto some Church; not to ours; to the Popish much lesse: therefore to one of their owne making. Now the ground of all these inferences being this, that in our Church there is no means of salvation, is out of the Reformers Principles most clearely to be proved. For wheresoever any matter of faith unto salvation necessary is denied, there can be no meanes of salvation: but in the Church of *England*, the Discipline, by them accounted a matter of Faith, and necessary to salvation, is not only denied, but impugned, and the professors thereof oppressed: *Ergo*. Againe, (but this reason perhaps is weak.) Every true Church of Christ acknowledgeth the whole Gospel of Christ: the discipline, in their opinion, is a part of the Gospel, and yet by our Church resisted, *Ergo*. Againe, The Discipline is essentially united to the Church: by which terme, *essentially*, they must meane either an essentiall part, or an essentiall property. Both which waies it must needs be, that



that where that essentiall Discipline is not, neither is there any Church. If therefore between them and the *Brownists* there should be appointed a solemne Disputation, whereof with us they have been oftentimes so earnest Challengers: it doth not yet appeare what other answer they could possibly frame to these and the like Arguments, wherewith they might be pressed, but fairely to deny the conclusion, (for all the premises are their own) or rather ingeniously to reverse their own principles before laid, whereon so foule absurdities have been so firmly built. What further proofes you can bring out of their high words, magnifying the Discipline, I leave to your better remembrance: but above all points, I am desirous this one should be strongly inforced against them, because it wringeth them most of all, and is of all others (for ought I see) the most unanswerable. You may notwithstanding say that you would be heartily glad these their positions might so be salved as the *Brownists* might not appeare to have

have issued out of their loines : but untill that be done , they must give us leave to thinke that they have cast the seed whereout these tares are growen.

Another sort of men there is, which have been content to run on with the reformers for a time, and to make them poore Instruments of their owne designes. These are a sort of godlesse politicks, who perceiving the plot of Discipline to consist of these two parts, the overthrow of Episcopall, and erection of Presbitriall Authority, and that this later can take no place till the former be removed, are content to joyn with them in the distructive part of Discipline, bearing them in hand, that in the other also they shall find them as ready. But when time shall come, it may be they would be as loath to be yoaked with that kind of regiment, as now they are willing to be released from this. These mens ends in all their actions, is *to win*, their pretence and colour, Reformation. Those things which under this colour they have effected to their own  
good,

good, are 1. by maintaining a contrary faction, they have kept the Clergy alwaies in awe, and thereby made them more pliable and willing to buy their peace. 2. By maintaining an opinion of equality among Ministers, they have made way to their own purposes for devouring Cathedrall Churches and Bps Livings. 3. By exclaiming against abuses in the Church they have carried their own corrupt dealings in the civill state more covertly. For, such is the nature of the multitude, they are not able to apprehend many things at once, so as being possessed with dislike or liking of any one thing, many other in the meane time may escape them without being perceived. 4. They have sought to disgrace the Clergy in entertaining a conceit in mens minds, and confirming it by continuall practise, that men of learning, and specially of the Clergy, which are imployed in the chiefeft kind of learning, are not to be admitted, or sparingly admitted to matters of State; contrary to the practise of all well governed Com-

mon-wealths, and of our own till these late yeares.

A third sort of men there is, though not descended from the reformers, yet in part raised and greatly strengthened by them, namely the cursed crew of *Atheists*. This also is one of those points, which I am desirous you should handle most effectually, and straine your selfe therein to all points of motion and affection, as in that of the *Brownists*, to all strength and sinewes of reason. This is a sort most damnable, and yet by the generall suspition of the world at this day most common. The causes of it, which are in the parties themselves, although you handle in the beginning of the fift booke, yet here againe they may be touched; but the occasions of helpe and furtherance which by the reformers have been yeilded unto them, are, as I conceive, two, sencelesse preaching, and disgracing of the Ministry; for how, should not men dare to impugne that which neither by force of reason, nor by authority of persons is maintained: But  
in



in the parties themselves these two causes I conceive of Atheisme. 1. More abundance of Wit than judgement, and of Witty than Iudicious learning; whereby they are more inclined to contradict any thing, than willing to be informed of the truth. They are not therefore men of sound learning for the most part, but smatterers, neither is their kind of Dispute so much by force of argument, as by scoffing. Which humour of scoffing and turning matters most serious into merriment, is now become so common, as we are not to marvaile what the Prophet meanes by the seat of scorers, nor what the Apostels by fore-telling of scorers to come: our own age hath verified their speech unto us. Which also may be an Argument against these scoffers and *Atheists* themselves, seeing it hath been so many ages agoe foretold, that such men the later daies of the world should afford; which could not be done by any other spirit save that whereunto things future and present are alike. And even for the maine question of



the Resurrection, whereat they stick so mightily, was it not plainly fore-told that men should in the later times say, *Where is the promise of his coming?* Against the Creation, the Arke, and divers other points, exceptions are said to be taken; the ground whereof is superfluity of wit without ground of learning and judgement. A second cause of *Atheisme* is sensuality, which maketh men desirous to remove all stops and impediments of their wicked life: among which because Religion is the chiefest, so as neither in this life without shame they can persist therein, (nor if that be true) without torment in the life to come, they whet their wits to annihilate the joyes of Heaven, wherein they see (if any such be) they can have no part, and likewise the pains of hell, wherein their portion must needs be very great. They labour therefore not that they may not deserve those pains, but that, deserving them, there may be no such pains to seize upon them. But what conceit can be imagined more base then that

that man should strive to perswade himselfe even against the secret instinct (no doubt) of his own mind, that his soule is as the soule of a beast, mortall and corruptible with the body. Against which barbarous opinion their own *Atheisme* is a very strong argument. For were not the soule a nature separable from the body, how could it enter into discourse of things meerely spirituall, and nothing at all pertaining to the body? Surely the soule were not able to conceive any thing of heaven, no not so much as to dispute against heaven, and against God; if there were not in it somewhat heavenly, and derived from God.

The last which have received strength & encouragement from the reformers are Papists; against whom although they are most bitter enemies, yet unwittingly they have given them great advantage. For what can any enemy rather desire then the breach and dissention of thole which are Confederates against him? wherein they are to remember, that if our Communion with Papists

in some few Ceremonies doe so much strengthen them, as is pretended, how much more doth this division and rent among our selves, especially seeing it is maintained to be, not in light matters only, but even in matter of faith and salvation. Which over-reaching speech of theirs, because it is so open to advantage both for the *Barrowist*, and the Papist, we are to wish and hope for, that they will acknowledge it to have been spoken rather in heat of Affection, then with soundnesse of judgement, and that through their exceeding love to that creature of Discipline which themselves have bred, nourished, and maintained, their mouth in commendation of her did somewhat overflow.

From hence you may proceed (but the means of connexion I leave to your selfe) to another discourse, which I think very meet to be handled either here, or elsewhere at large: the parts whereof may be these:  
 1. That in this cause between them and us, men are to sever the proper and essentiall points and controversy, from those which  
 are

are accidentall. The most essentiall and proper are these two, overthrow of Episcopall, erection of Presbyteriall authority. But in these two points whosoever joyneth with them is accompted of their number; whosoever in all other points agreeth with them, yet thinketh the authority of Bishops not unlawfull, and of Elders not necessary, may justly be severed from their retinew. Those things therefore which either in the persons, or in the Lawes and orders themselves are faulty may be complained on, acknowledged and amended; yet they no whit the neere their maine purpose. For what if all errors by them supposed in our Liturgy were amended, even according to their own hearts desire? if *Non-residence*, *Pluralities*, and the like, were utterly iaken away; are their Lay-elders therefore presently authorized, their Sovereigne Ecclesiasticall Iurisdiction established?

But even in their complaining against the outward and accidentall matters in Church-government, they are many waies faulty.



faulty. 1. In their end which they propose to themselves. For in declaiming against abuses, their meaning is not to have them redressed, but, by disgracing the present state, to make way for their own Discipline. As therefore in *Venice*, if any Senator should discourse against the power of their Senate; as being either too Soveraigne, or too weake in government, with purpose to draw their authority to a moderation, it might well be suffered; but not so, if it should appeare he spake with purpose to induce another State by depraving the present, so in all causes belonging either to Church or Common-wealth, wee are to have regard what mind the complaining part doth beare, whether of amendment, or of innovation, and accordingly either to suffer or suppress it. Their objection therefore is frivolous, *Why, may not men speake against abuses?* Yes, but with desire to cure the part affected, not to destroy the whole.

2. A second fault is in their manner of complaining, not only because it is for the most  
part



part in bitter and reproachfull termes, but also because it is unto the common people, Iudges incompetent & insufficient, both to determine any thing amisse, for want of skil and authority to amend it. Which also discovereth their intent and purpose to be rather destructive than corrective. Thirdly, those very exceptions which they take, are frivolous and impertinent: Some things indeed they accuse as impious: which if they may appeare to bee such, God forbid they should be maintained.

Against the rest it is only alleadged, that they are idle Ceremonies without use, and that better and more profitable might be devised. Wherein they are doubly deceived: for neither is it a sufficient plea to say, *This must give place, because a better may be devised*: and in our judgements of better and worse, we oftentimes conceive amisse, when we compare those things which are in devise with those which are in practise, for the imperfections of the one are hid, till by time and triall they be discovered: the o-  

D

thers

thers are already manifest and open to all. But last of all, (which is a point in my opinion of great regard, and which I am desirous to have enlarged) they doe not see, that for the most part when they strike at the state Ecclesiasticall, they secretly wound the Civill State; For personall faults, what can be said against the Church, which may not also agree to the Common-wealth? In both States men have alwaies been, and will be alwaies men, sometimes blinded with error, most commonly perverted by passions: many unworthy have been and are advanced in both, many worthy not regarded. As for abuses which they pretend to be in the Lawes themselves, when they inveigh against *Non-residence*, doe they take it a matter lawfull or expedient in the Civill-state, for a man to have a great and gainfull office in the North, himselfe continually remaining in the South? *Hee that hath an office, let him attend his office.* When they condemne plurality of livings spirituall to the pit of hell, what think they of infinite of temporall

rall promotions? By the great Philosopher, *Pol. lib. 2. cap. 9.* it is forbidden as a thing most dangerous to Commonwealths, that by the same man many great offices should be exercised. When they deride our Ceremonies as vaine and frivolous, were it hard to apply their exceptions even to those civill ceremonies, which at the Coronation, in Parliament, and all Courts of Iustice are used? Were it hard to argue even against Circumcision, the ordinance of God, as being a cruell ceremony; against the Passeover, as being ridiculous; shod, girt, a staffe in their hand, to eat a lambe?

To conclude, you may exhort the Clergy, (or what if you direct your Conclusion, not to the Clergy in generall, but only to the learned in, or of both Universities) you may exhort them to a due consideration of all things, and to a right esteeme and valuing of each thing in that degree wherein it ought to stand: for it oftentimes falleth out, what men have either devised themselves, or greatly delighted in, the price and excel-

lency thereof they doe admire above desert.  
 The chiefeft labour of a *Christian*, should  
 be to know; of a Minister, to preach *Christ*  
 crucified: in regard whereof not only  
 worldly things, but even things otherwise  
 precious, even the Discipline it selfe is vile  
 and base: where as now, by the heat of  
 contention, and violence of affection, the  
 zeale of men towards the one hath greatly  
 decayed their love to the other. Hereunto  
 therefore they are to be exhorted, to Preach  
*Christ crucified*, the mortification of the flesh,  
 the renewing of the spirit, not thole things,  
 which in time of strife seeme precious,  
 but passions being allayed, are  
 vaine and childish.

FINIS.



